

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **A-4**

WASHINGTON POST
25 May 1985

Senate Approves Antisatellite Tests

Amendment by Warner Wins Instead of Proposed Ban

By Tim Ahern
Associated Press

The Senate voted, 74 to 9, yesterday to approve final tests of an Air Force weapon designed to destroy satellites.

The vote was on a proposal by Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.) to allow three final-stage tests next year as long as President Reagan tells Congress that the tests will not disrupt negotiations aimed at banning the weapons.

The Senate rejected, 51 to 35, a testing ban proposed by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), who said it was "a signal of our good faith and willingness to restrain the arms race and keep it out of space."

Warner opposed the limit as "a unilateral concession which would erode the U.S. position" at the Geneva talks with the Soviet Union on trying to limit a wide range of weapons.

The debate centered on antisatellite weapons, or ASATs, designed to destroy orbiting satellites used by both superpowers for spying,

communications and early warning of attack.

The U.S. ASAT is a small warhead atop a rocket carried to the edge of space by an F15 jet, then released to pursue its target.

The U.S. weapon has been tested in stages but not fired against a target in space. That final round of testing is scheduled to start within a few months.

The three-test plan was attached to a bill authorizing a record Defense Department budget of \$302 billion for fiscal 1986. The Republican-controlled Senate has trimmed Reagan's defense buildup as part of the bill and has halved his proposed MX nuclear-missile program.

After considering dozens of amendments to the bill, the Senate adjourned for a holiday recess with plans to return June 3. Still pending are amendments on research into Reagan's proposed Strategic Defense Initiative and on aid to Nicaraguan rebels.

The Democratic-controlled House is considering a smaller defense budget, and the chambers'

differences would be resolved in a conference committee.

ASATs are among space weapons that are part of negotiations in Geneva that also cover long-range and medium-range nuclear weapons. The Soviets seek a halt to ASAT tests, while the Reagan administration has said it is open to such a proposal but has refused to halt ASAT testing as a condition to talks.

Last year, Congress banned final tests of the U.S. system in hopes that the pause might help negotiations, which had not then started.

Earlier, the Senate gave voice-vote approval to an amendment requiring a mandatory life sentence in prison for those convicted of espionage involving the Soviet Union or other communist nations in cases where no death sentence is imposed.

The amendment was offered by Minority Leader Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.), who said a person convicted of espionage but given capital punishment could be given probation or parole under current law.